

Chapter 28

The Effectiveness of Multiple Media Tools in L2 Listening: A Meta-Analysis

Tingting Kang
Northern Arizona University, USA

ABSTRACT

Due to the nature of listening, multiple media tools (e.g., audiocassette players, radio, video, multimedia, and language laboratory) have been utilized in second language (L2) listening instruction for a long time. This chapter recruited the most recently published empirical studies and meta-analyzed available evidence on the effects of different multiple media tools on L2 listening comprehension. The results revealed a medium-to-large effect of multiple media tools on listening comprehension in between-group designs (Cohen's $d = .69$). The effects of individual multiple media tools have also been statistically synthesized. Further, moderator analysis could help L2 educators and test developers make decisions on applying different multiple media tools in the fields of L2 instruction and assessment. Specifically, subtitles (in the first language/L1) /captions (in the source language/L2), as well as self-regulated listening and slow speed, are recommended to teachers and test developers as a means to improve learners' listening comprehension. In the end, this chapter concludes by identifying potential areas for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is considered to be a very crucial language skill because it appears at “the early stages of L2 learning” (Nation & Newton, 2009, p. 37), enables learners to receive language input, and facilitates the emergence of other language skills (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). According to Burley-Allen (1995), the average time spent on basic skills during the daily communication process is 35% for speaking, 16% for reading, 9% for writing, and 40% for listening. However, listening has also been described as “the least understood and most overlooked of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)” (Nation & Newton, 2009, p. 37). The continuous speech-flow makes the listening comprehension process hard to capture and analyze. For instance, in the real spoken language, listeners cannot slow it

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down or break it down into manageable chunks. Therefore, effectively teaching and learning L2 listening is the greatest concern for most of the L2 educators.

Several models have been developed to explain how listening process functions, including the bottom-up model, the top-down model, and the interactive model (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). In the bottom-up model, listeners start with the small units in the acoustic message, such as individual sounds, to achieve listening comprehension. The top-down model suggests that learners rely on prior contextual knowledge and utterance interpretations in processing a text. Allowing for the individual variations in listening processing, the interactive model synthesizes the bottom-up and top-down models. With regards to listening activities, Rost (2011) discusses six widely used instructional designs in L2 listening, namely, intensive listening, selective listening, interactive listening, extensive listening, responsive listening, and autonomous listening.

In light of the possible factors in listening passages that influence listening success, Buck (2001), and Vandergrift and Goh (2012) provide very comprehensive summaries. Specifically, the statistically significant predictors of listening comprehension in listening passages that have been empirically tested are vocabulary/lexis, syntax/grammar, topics, number of the topics, speed, pronunciation/intonation, and multiple media. Table 1 summarizes these predictors and the corresponding empirical studies.

Multiple media tools play an important role in the field of L2 listening. Due to the acoustic nature of listening, multiple media tools have been utilized in L2 listening ever since the sound could be captured through technology. Such multiple media tools include audiocassette players, radio, video, language laboratory, and the like. Multiple media tools have the advantages of facilitating L2 learners' extensive and intensive listening practice, promoting learning motivation, and getting access to authentic listening materials.

Meanwhile, different researchers have empirically tested the effects of the multiple media tools. Therefore, this chapter aims to recruit the most recently published empirical studies on L2 multiple media listening tools by focusing on the following issues in the Qualitative Synthesis: Background section:

1. Multiple media tools that have been utilized
2. The participants of the studies
3. Research methods (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method) that have been used
4. How listening was operationalized, and
5. Effective multiple media tools.

Table 1. Predictors of listening comprehension

Predictors	Empirical Studies
Vocabulary/lexis	Bonk, 2000; Mecartty, 2000; Stæhr, 2009; Trofimovich & Isaacs, 2012
Syntax/grammar	Conrad, 1985; Mecartty, 2000
Prior knowledge/topic	Buck & Tatsuoka, 1998; Freedle & Kostin, 1999; Long, 1990
Number of topics	Buck & Tatsuoka, 1998
Speed	Griffiths, 1990; Zhao, 1997; Jensen & Vinther, 2003
Pronunciation/intonation	Freedle & Kostin, 1999; Trofimovich & Isaacs, 2012
Multiple media	Parry & Meredith, 1984; Shin, 1998; Wagner, 2010; Wagner 2013

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